

Empowering Rural Youth Through Cross-Sector Participation

Name of the organisation

Cēsu novada Vecpiebalgas apvienības pārvalde

Website of the organisation

https://www.instagram.com/piebalgas_jauniesi/

Location of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Youth work in rural areas

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

The main aim of our good practice is to empower rural youth, especially those facing economic, social, or learning difficulties, by creating more opportunities for participation, learning, and community involvement. We wanted to build a system where young people feel included, supported, and able to contribute to their communities.

Challenges and Changes Addressed

In many rural areas youth participation is limited. Young people often felt isolated, with limited access to sports, culture, volunteering, or other meaningful activities. Local services and institutions (such as schools, municipalities, and community groups) often worked separately, which reduced the impact of their efforts.

Through our practice we created a cross-sectoral approach, linking schools, municipal departments, youth workers, and local communities. This not only increased the number of opportunities (in sports, culture, local history, volunteering, and entrepreneurship), but also made them more inclusive and accessible. Youth workers played a key role, using non-formal education to support those with fewer opportunities.

As a result, youth participation has increased significantly, communities cooperate more effectively, and young people now have new pathways for personal development, confidence-building, and active citizenship.

Good practice description

Our good practice was developed to support rural youth facing economic, social, and learning difficulties. The main challenge we saw was that many young people in rural areas had few opportunities to participate, often feeling isolated, while schools, municipalities, and local groups worked separately instead of together.

To address this, we created a cross-sector system that connects schools, municipal departments (sports, culture, history, social services), youth workers, and local communities. Over three years, this system has significantly increased youth participation, giving them a wider range of opportunities to engage in sports, cultural projects, volunteering, heritage activities, and entrepreneurship.

The key was to co-design activities with youth, making them relevant and inclusive, while youth workers provided extra support through non-formal education. Cooperation with schools played a central role, as it allowed community projects and volunteering to be linked to education, making participation more meaningful.

This practice has shown that with coordination, creativity, and youth involvement, even small rural communities can open new pathways for young people to develop skills, build confidence, and feel part of society.

Good practice result & concrete effects

The implementation of this good practice has brought visible and measurable changes in rural communities. By connecting schools, municipalities, youth workers, and local organizations, we created a system where young people feel that their voices matter and that opportunities are available to them regardless of their background.

One clear indicator is the growth of youth participation in local school youth governments:

- In 2023, there were only 7 active members,
- In 2024, this number increased to 13,
- By 2025, participation had grown to 20 members.

This is just one of the measurable results showing how much youth involvement has expanded.

Another significant outcome is that young people themselves have co-founded the youth organization “Rural Youth Development”, which already implements both local and international activities within the Erasmus+ framework. This step demonstrates that rural youth are not only participating but also taking ownership of initiatives and creating long-term structures for sustainability.

Beyond numbers, we see qualitative effects: young people are more motivated, schools and municipalities cooperate more effectively, and communities are enriched by volunteering, cultural, and sports initiatives. Youth with fewer opportunities have gained confidence, taken leadership roles, and are now shaping both their local and international future.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Organisation and practice